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# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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*A Publication Concerned With  
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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## The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

*President*

**Roy John**

**Objectives of the Club:** To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

**Club Publications:** THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on club activities.

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# Welcome, New Members

## Ottawa Area

Daphne Barrenger	Terry A. Levere
Allan Bowlby & Family	Deborah S. Levey
Adrian Camfield	Sylvia J. Lindsay
Cynthia A. Cannizzo	Donna L. Maher (Wang)
Lily Chen & Family	Doug L. Mallon
Brenda A. Cole & Family	Gillian Marston
Christiana, Rebecca & William Danard	George T. McColm & Family
Virginia & Iain Davidson & Family	Ian McDonald
Paul Dawm	Denise Morier
Karen N. Edmonds	Ethel A. Morris
Pam R. Fitzgerald & Family	Michael F. Olsen
Patrick J. Fortune & Family	Cherie L.M. Orr
Anke Fritzsche & Mark Eberle	Jean-Pierre Perrier
Mark Gawn	John & Allison Randall
Alan & Carol German	Thomas A. Reeve
Arthur & Ellen Grenke & Family	Dianne E. Richardson
Paul R. Gully & Lois M. Leslie	Nancy L. Seepala & Family
Barbara D. Harris	A. Valerie F. Small
Eliane & Roger Herz-Fischler	Sally H. Stolberg
Walter G. Hoermann & Family	Harold N. Strub
Jocelyne F. Houle	Lynn Symonds
Susan C. Howell & Roger V. Lucy	Margaret R. Turner
Joyce E. Kennedy	Wanda I. Vervoort

## Other Areas

Sylvain Archambault	K. Bruce Winterbon
Buckingham, P.Q.	Deep River, Ont.
Giles R. Morrell	Doreen Watler
Buckingham, P.Q.	Chairman
	Membership Committee
	May 1991

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**DEADLINE:** *Material intended for the October - December 1991 issue must be in the editor's hands before September 1, 1991. Mail your manuscripts to:*

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Nepean, Ontario, K2E 5J5  
H: (613) 225-7081; W: (613) 990-6443; Fax: (613) 990-6451.

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# The OFNC Awards for 1990

*Bill Gummer*

At the Soirée on 26 April, 1991, three of our four awards were presented for 1990 activities and achievements. President Roy John described the four awards that were set up in 1981, read the citations and presented the certificates to three winners, all of whom were present. Roy regretted, that for the fourth time in its history, no fitting candidate for the Anne Hanes Natural History Award had been identified.

**The Member of the Year Award** went to **Francis R. Cook**. As editor of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, the official publication of our Club, Francis had made an extraordinary effort to recover the journal's normal schedule. In 1990 he got six issues off the press, and several more issues are well developed and will be forthcoming shortly. This schedule recovery is very valuable to the Club because of the acknowledgement that the *CFN* receives as a unique journal with broad coverage on natural history. The Council is very pleased to recognize Francis for this success. In accepting, Francis emphasized the help of his wife, Joyce, which enabled him to tackle the extra work that this involved.

**The Service Award** was given to **Rob Lee** for his years of work with the Macoun Field Club. Rob has run both indoor meetings and outdoor field trips, always encouraging our junior members to observe, learn, and describe what exists in nature. The Macoun Field Club and the OFNC are indebted to him for his continued work in this area.

**The Conservation Award** went to **Phil Reilly** who has long been involved in matters concerning environmental awareness. As Chairman of the Wetlands Preservation Group of West Carleton, Phil led the efforts to save a Class 1 Wetland on Constance Creek from development. He is a founding member of ECOVISION, a regional coalition of groups and individuals looking for better environmental management. He has been prominent in the fight to save Leirrim Wetlands from development. The Club was pleased to recognize Phil's dedicated environmental stand. In accepting, Phil also acknowledged the help of his wife in this period of very concentrated effort.

Also at the Soirée, Jeff Harrison (immediate Past-President) presented the 1990 **President's Prize** to **Peter Hall**, who has been deeply involved in bringing the Wildlife Garden project into being. The arrangement with the Central Experimental Farm, the Friends of the Farm and the OFNC is on a firm basis. The selected area, south of the Arboretum, has undergone some wildlife and plant surveys, and plans are underway to modify the existing drainage pattern to improve certain habitats. Long range plans are being developed and Peter has identified volunteers and keeps them informed of discussions and progress. ▢



### Pictures on facing page taken at the Soirée by John Furlong

Top row, from left to right: Rob Lee receiving the service award from President Roy John; Rebecca Danard receiving award for her exhibit from Libby Fox; Natasha Todd, President of the Intermediates, Macoun Club. Below Natasha, Andrew Fournier, President of the Juniors, Macoun Club.

Middle row, from left to right: Phil Reilly receiving the Conservation award from Roy John; Francis Cook, Member of the Year; Melanie Lussier, winner of 1st prize for her natural history exhibit.

Bottom row, left to right: Music to match the mood provided by Audrey Furlong, Heather Bale, Deirdre Furlong and Connie Clark; Shelby Banner, Seniors, Macoun Club and exhibit prize winner with Roy John and Phil Martin on the podium. ❧

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## Crane Fly Congregations in Confined Spaces

*Jack Holliday*

Crane flies (Tipulidae) resemble large mosquitos. They have very long legs. They do not bite. Their larvae are usually aquatic or live in damp soil.

Crane flies trapped indoors can often be found “bouncing” against the inside of a window, trying to escape. If they find a small opening, they quickly take advantage of it and fly out. One can easily damage a crane fly by trying to catch it in order to release it outside; in such circumstances, the fly invariably loses a leg or two.

A safer method (for the crane fly) is to place a large glass tumbler over it and to hold it tightly against the pane of glass. Then slide a stiff sheet of paper along the glass and under the mouth of the tumbler, trapping the fly inside. You can then transport the fly out of doors without damaging it. You'll need someone to open doors for you, as both hands will be engaged holding the tumbler and paper. Once outside, remove the paper from the mouth of the tumbler to release the crane fly, which will take off with surprising speed.

(Incidentally, this is a safe method of removing and releasing wasps trapped against windows. Wasps are very beneficial insects, and those trapped inside windows in May are usually large Queens, searching for a place to found a colony. Instead of swatting them, use a tumbler and paper to safely trap and release them.)

I have also observed crane flies in a variety of wilder locales. Once, while clambering along the steep shore of a lake in the Gatineau, I came upon an ancient felled tree trunk barring my progress. I had to make a decision: climb over the mossy, slippery trunk or try to get under it. Bending down to examine the hole under the tree at my feet, to see if it was large enough for me to squeeze through, I was surprised to see a "dance" of about a dozen crane flies. Most surprising to me was the hole, about the size of a bowling ball, which they had chosen for a dance hall. Before I could study them, the flies, as surprised as I was, flew off in various directions.

Another time, prior to removing my canoe from the raised polcs where it had been placed, inverted, for the winter, I cautiously stooped down and examined underneath the craft to insure that there was no nest of wasps that would resent being disturbed. Brushing a cobweb away with my hand, I discovered perhaps 50 crane flies that had chosen the bow of the inverted canoe, behind the cobweb, in which to perform their dance. Again, my intrusion frightened the crane flies and they dispersed before I could admire their intricate movements.

The third occasion on which I saw crane flies dancing in a confined space was near the Moira River south of Tweed, Ontario. The bedrock in that region is limestone. Rain water seeps into cracks and gradually dissolves the stone, widening the cracks and eventually making the surface rock into large blocks averaging 1 to 2 m with the spaces between ranging from 2 to 25 cm. One must be careful when walking over such a surface to avoid trapping a foot in the cracks.

While watching my step in this manner, I saw perhaps 20 crane flies flying up and down in a space between two stone blocks. A sheet-type spider web was spun across the top of this space, through which I could see the flies. I squatted, the better to see. Up and down the crane flies went, seemingly too many for the space, but apparently not interfering with one another. At the top of the flight space, their wings appeared to touch the web sometimes, but none was trapped. It was as if they dared to be caught in the web. Luckily, I was able to watch them for a minute or two before they became aware of my presence and flew away.

Why some crane flies choose such confined spaces is a mystery to me. Certainly such a space is free from wind, and affords protection from predators to some extent. Whatever the reason, it is surely beneficial to the reproductive cycle of crane flies. Most adult insects have a short time to reproduce, measured in days or hours, and there is no time for frivolity. ▢





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# Rare Canadian Vascular Plants and Their Occurrence in the Ottawa District

*Albert Dugal*

*Botany Division, Canadian Museum of Nature*

Canada's flora contains approximately 3,269 native species of vascular plants (plants with specialized tissues carrying food and water throughout their systems). Included in this group are clubmosses, horsetails, ferns, conifers and flowering plants. Until recently, identification of nationally rare species has been difficult due to a scarcity of information. In December 1990, the Canadian Museum of Nature published "Rare Vascular Plants in Canada - Our Natural Heritage" by George W. Argus and Kathleen M. Pryer. This timely and substantive work represents the culmination of many years of effort by botanists from across the country under the leadership of George Argus. As head of the Rare and Endangered Plants Project at the Museum, George Argus directed the series of publications on provincial and territorial rare vascular plants on which the national list is based.

The main criterion used for the inclusion of a species was "that it must be rare in each of the provinces and/or territories in which it occurred."<sup>1</sup> In a few instances, new, convincing evidence prompted the deletion or addition of species to the list.

An alphabetized checklist of 1,009 rare, Canadian vascular plants forms the core of the publication. Each entry contains the following information: scientific name, family name, reference, Nature Conservancy Ranks, and Canadian priority. Ginseng, for example, is treated in the following way:

*Panax quinquefolius* L.

(*P. quinquefolium* auct.)

ARALIACEAE

Reference: Argus et al. 1982-1987,

Bouchard et al. 1983

Nature Conservancy Ranks:

Global Rank: G4

Canada Rank: N4: Ontario S4,

Quebec S3

U.S. Rank: Alabama S3, Connecticut

S1, Delaware SX, Georgia S?,

Iowa S3S4, Illinois S?, Indiana S3,

Kentucky S4, Louisiana S1, Maine

S2, Maryland S3, Massachusetts

S3, Michigan S2, Minnesota S?,

Mississippi S3, North Carolina S3,

Nebraska S?, New Hampshire S2,

New Jersey S3, Oklahoma SU,

Pennsylvania S4, Rhode Island

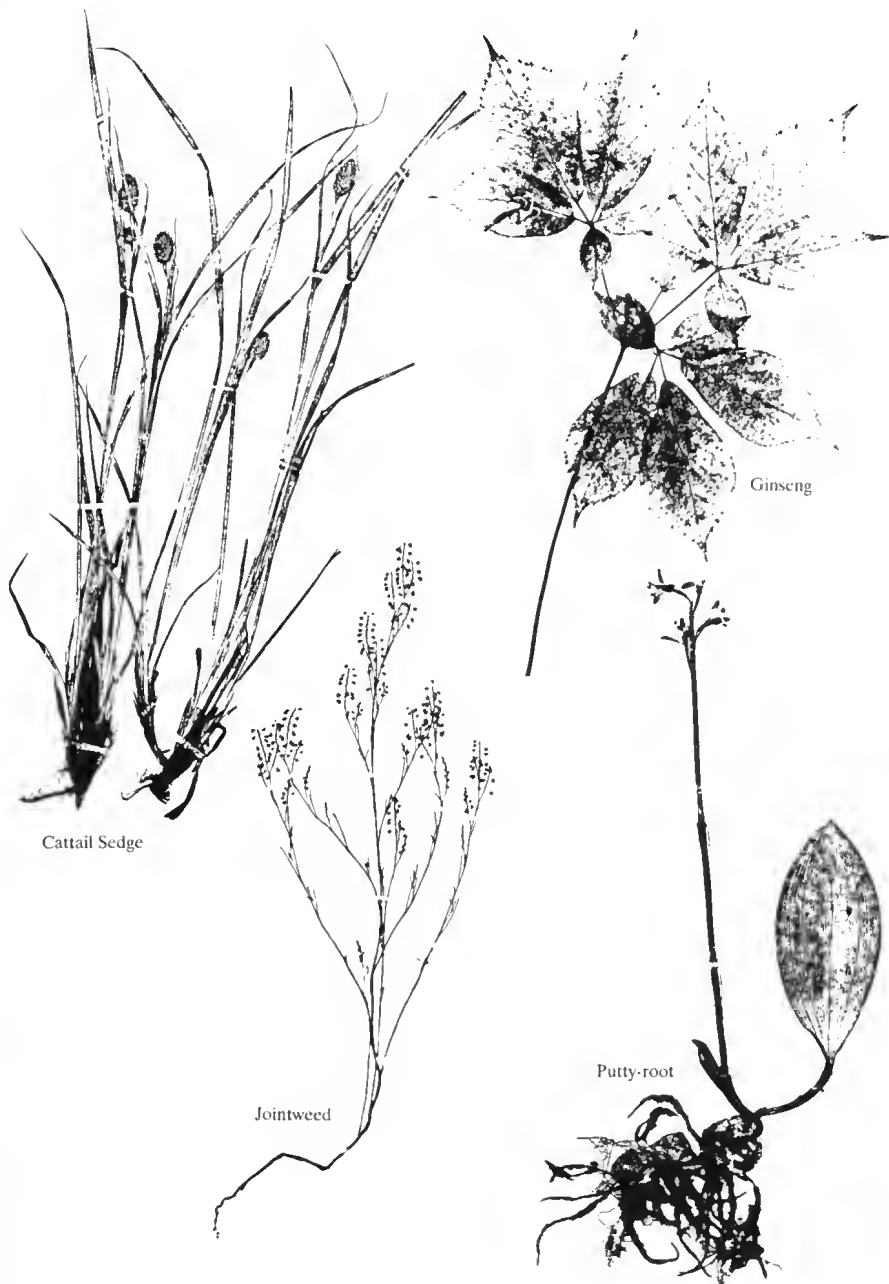
SH, South Carolina S2S3, South

Dakota S1, Tennessee S3, Virginia

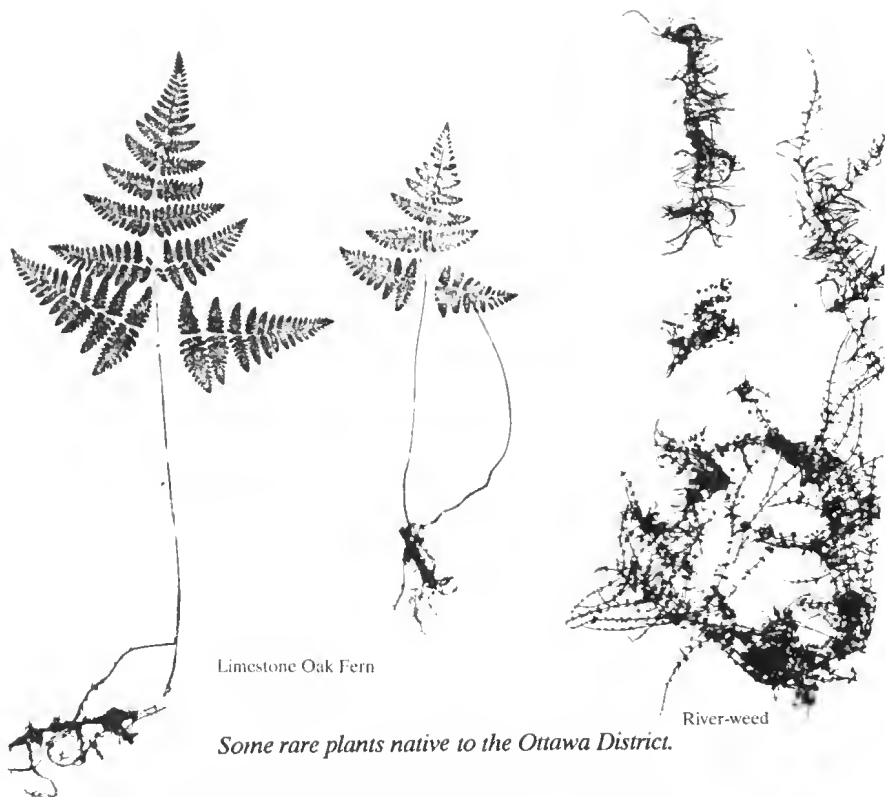
S3S4, Wisconsin S4, West Virginia S4

Canadian Priority: 2

Cosewic Status: threatened (White 1988)



*Some rare plants native to the Ottawa District.*



Limestone Oak Fern

River-weed

*Some rare plants native to the Ottawa District.*

Ranking and prioritization systems are explained, and a full list of references included.

The 1,009 nationally rare vascular plants represent almost a third of Canada's native flora. This high percentage results primarily from the combination of human activities (agriculture, forestry, industrialization and urbanization) and plant geography. About 70% of the Canadian population is concentrated in a 100-kilometer-wide band along the border with the contiguous United States. This same border cuts through the northern edge of four major North American floristic provinces - Coastal Plain, Eastern Deciduous Forest, Grassland and Cordilleran Forest. Consequently, "there are a large number of plant taxa that have a relatively small range in Canada and are therefore regarded as naturally rare"!

Valuable appendices are also incorporated into the publication: (1) families with rare species, both itemized alphabetically (2) rare endemics in Canada, (3) checklists of the rare national vascular plants occurring in each province and territory, and (4) priority lists of rare vascular plants in Canada (rare species rated according to a priority scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest priority).

Embodied in the final section is a series of maps - one per rare species - indicating the presence, rather than actual range, of Canadian rarities in various provinces, states, and territories of North America.

"Rare Vascular Plants in Canada - Our Natural Heritage" is invaluable in providing a reputable data base incorporating much of the current knowledge of rare Canadian vascular plants. It will serve as a source book for this subject for the foreseeable future. As such, it will be of interest to a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations, i.e., naturalists, environmental consultants, conservation groups, developers, municipalities. Undoubtedly, this volume will be employed in environmental assessments, priority-setting for conserving natural areas, and by environmentalists battling to protect or defend ecosystems with nationally rare vascular plants.

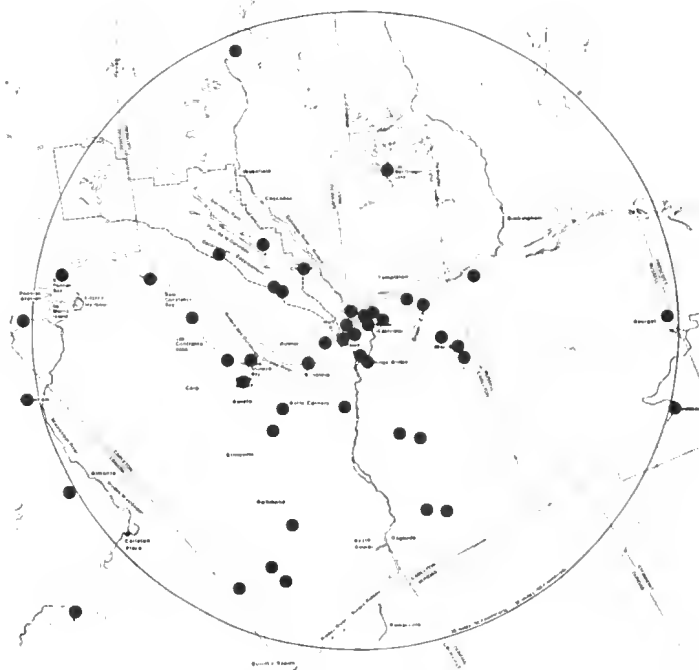
Twenty-four species of rare Canadian vascular plants are native to the Ottawa District (see Table 1). Representing a mere 2.4% of the national list, this number pales when compared to Essex County, Ontario, in the rather restricted Carolinian Zone, home to 19% of the nationally rare vascular plants (approximately 191 species).

Knowledge of the Ottawa District flora is still incomplete. Gillett and White (1978), in their Checklist of Vascular Plants of the Ottawa-Hull Region, Canada, pointed out that "collecting has been sporadic and subject to bursts of interest over the years but a deliberate survey has never been conducted..... Much work remains to be done."<sup>2</sup> These words have proven prophetic because since the checklist was published in 1978, approximately 90 vascular plant species have been added to our local flora. It's safe to assume that more new plant records will be discovered in the future; a few of these may be nationally rare.

Besides the 24 species of rare Canadian vascular plants native to the Ottawa District, five other nationally rare species are adventive or introduced from Southern Ontario (see Table 2). Some of these have established themselves in rather restricted areas.

The occurrence of rare national species in the Ottawa District appears to be quite uneven (see map). Is this truly representative, or merely the reflection of an inadequate botanical survey? Whatever the reason, plants can be found on both public and private lands. Gatineau Park, the Marlborough Forest, the Constance Bay Sand Hills, and parts of the Greenbelt, particularly Stony Swamp, Mer Bleue and Green's Creek represent habitats in the public domain. Other important areas, such as the Leitrim (Albion Road) Wetlands, the South Gloucester Study Area and the Osgoode Wetlands, are largely privately-owned and offer virtually no protection to the important national plant species.

Several species of rare Canadian vascular plants in the Ottawa District may already be extirpated. No recent sightings or collections of *Listera australis*, *Aplectrum hyemale*, *Scirpus heterochaetus*, *Torreyochloa pallida* var. *pallida*, *Gymnocarpium robertianum* and *Muhlenbergia tenuiflora* var. *tenuiflora* have been recorded. Urbanization and country estate lot development are threatening or have already reduced the numbers of some species.



*Distribution of rare Canadian vascular plants native to the Ottawa District.*

If nationally rare vascular plant species are to survive in the Ottawa District, the ecosystems in which they occur must not only be protected but **managed** in such a way that allowed human activities do not threaten the plants, e.g., not putting a nature trail through a colony of Ginseng.

Hopefully, the publication of "Rare Vascular Plants in Canada - Our Natural Heritage" will provide extra impetus to safeguard both publicly and privately-owned ecosystems containing rare species in the Ottawa District so that future generations may enjoy these nationally significant plants.

#### *Literature Cited*

1. Argus, G.W. and K.M. Pryer. 1990. Rare Vascular Plants in Canada - Our Natural Heritage. Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa. 194 pp. plus maps.
2. Gillett, J.M. and D.J. White. 1978. Checklist of Vascular Plants of the Ottawa-Hull Region, Canada. National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa. 155 pp.

#### **NOTE**

"Rare Vascular Plants in Canada - Our Natural Heritage" is available in English or French from: Canadian Museum of Nature, Direct Mail Section, P.O. Box 3443, Station "D", Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1P 6P4. Price in Canadian funds, \$17.06; U.S.A. \$18.95 (postage, handling and taxes included).

TABLE 1

Rare Canadian vascular plants native to the Ottawa District. The number in parentheses refers to the priority rating; the scale is 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest priority.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Rugulose Grapefern (3)<br><i>Botrychium rugulosum</i>                 | 13. Houghton's Cyperus (3)<br><i>Cyperus houghtonii</i>                |
| 2. Purple-stemmed Cliffbrake (4)<br><i>Pellaea atropurpurea</i>          | 14. Pale Great Bulrush (3)<br><i>Scirpus heterochaetus</i>             |
| 3. Limestone Oak Fern (2)<br><i>Gymnocarpium robertianum</i>             | 15. Putty-root (2)<br><i>Aplectrum hyemale</i>                         |
| 4. Blunt-lobed Woodsia (2)<br><i>Woodsia obtusa</i>                      | 16. Southern Twayblade (2)<br><i>Listera australis</i>                 |
| 5. Branching Bur-reed (3)<br><i>Sparganium angrocladum</i>               | 17. Prairie White-fringed Orchid (1)<br><i>Plantanthera leucophaea</i> |
| 6. Walter's Barnyard Grass (3)<br><i>Echinocloa walteri</i>              | 18. Jointweed (4)<br><i>Polygonella articulata</i>                     |
| 7. Woodland Dropseed (3)<br><i>Muhlenbergia sylv. var. sylvatica</i>     | 19. River-weed (2)<br><i>Podostemum ceratophyllum</i>                  |
| 8. Slender Satin grass (2)<br><i>Muhlenbergia tenui. var. tenuiflora</i> | 20. Lange's Thorn, Biltmore Haw (2)<br><i>Crataegus intricata</i>      |
| 9. Rough Dropseed (2)<br><i>Sporobolus asper var. asper</i>              | 21. Wing-angled Loosestrife (5)<br><i>Lythrum alatum</i>               |
| 10. Torrey's Manna Grass (3)<br><i>Torreyochloa pallida var. pallida</i> | 22. Ginseng (2)<br><i>Panax quinquefolius</i>                          |
| 11. Onion-coloured Sedge (4)<br><i>Carex prasina</i>                     | 23. Southern Arrow-wood (4)<br><i>Viburnum recognitum</i>              |
| 12. Cattail Sedge (3)<br><i>Carex typhina</i>                            | 24. Discoid Beggarticks (3)<br><i>Bidens discoidea</i>                 |

TABLE 2

Rare Canadian Vascular Plants Adventive (introduced) to the Ottawa District

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Dodder<br><i>Cuscuta campestris</i>                  | 4. Gray-headed Coneflower<br><i>Ratibida pinnata</i>    |
| 2. Oswego Tea<br><i>Monarda didyma</i>                  | 5. Cup-plant, Indian-cup<br><i>Silphium perfoliatum</i> |
| 3. Lance-leaved Tickseed<br><i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i> |   |

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# Conservation of our Terrestrial Orchids: Essential Questions

Marilyn H.S. Light  
Continuing Education, University of Ottawa

Orchids are beautiful, intriguing, challenging plants. Of the more than 35,000 species worldwide, the vast majority are tropical epiphytes clinging to the bark, twigs and even the leaves of trees and shrubs. A few thousand species are terrestrial and live rooted in sand, humus, leafmould, moss or even in stony talus at the foot of mountain glaciers. All 72 of the orchid species found in Canada are terrestrials; of these, three are aliens, *Epipactis helleborine* being the best known (Catling, 1983b). Thanks to efforts of those who participated in the Native Orchid Survey (Reddoch, 1977), we know that 42 species have been found within a 50 km radius of Ottawa.

Not many of our local orchids attract attention. Many are rather insignificant in size or colour. While this fact may save them from being picked or dug, it does not preserve them if their habitat is destroyed. More often than not, the small or inconspicuous species are forgotten except as objects to be debated on a taxonomic, distributional or historic basis. However, they are just as important as the larger showy orchids. All deserve study so that we may better understand them and thus develop strategies to conserve them.

One way to discover the attributes of a plant or animal is to carry out long term population studies. Joyce and Allan Reddoch, in their interesting 15 year study of *Goodyera tessellata* reported in 1989, postulated that the decline of an orchid colony was linked to the decline of beaver predators such as the wolf. Beavers flooded and caused to topple trees which previously shaded the orchid plants; the colony declined and many died. I have been involved in a long term study of the European Helleborine orchid, *Epipactis helleborine* (see illustration). Often considered to be dull and uninteresting if not downright annoying, this weedy orchid frustrates field naturalists and gardeners. The Helleborine is listed as a weed (Alex *et al*, 1982), and yet it has value, not simply as a compost additive, but as a tool to help us understand threatened species.

I have been studying a population of 849 Helleborine orchid plants in Gatineau Park for the last six years. At first I thought that plants with only one to three leaves and no flowers were immature and not yet of flowering size. I have shown this assumption to be incorrect. Five hundred and forty-nine plants came up only once during the six year study. Only two of the 849 plants emerged



*The Helleborine Orchid, *Elpactis helleborine*, carries from three to more than fifty flowers on an upright stem. X 3*

every one of the six years. Yet those that had not emerged were not necessarily dead. At least 50% are still alive though living a subterranean existence. I have determined that as many as four years can pass before a plant re-appears. It is interesting to note that the possibility that a plant could emerge in any particular year is determined at least one year prior to that time. Recent evidence suggests that the time lag may be two years. Perhaps these findings may shed light on the intermittent appearance of other, rarer species?

Our large, colourful ladyslipper orchids attract the most attention. These include the Moccasin Orchid, *Cypripedium acaule*, the Yellow Ladyslipper, *C. calceolus* var. *parviflorum* and var. *pubescens*, and the Showy Ladyslipper, *C. reginae*. Even though these orchids are protected under various statutes, their North American populations are under tremendous pressure by commer-



cial collectors or by those who would "just love to have one in their garden." Those who have tried growing the Moccasin Orchid or the Showy Ladyslipper collected from the wild will know that they are short-lived in the garden if they survive even the first growing season. For whatever the reason, these orchids are limited to very specific habitats. Remove them from or destroy their habitat, and the orchid is no more.

The Yellow Ladyslipper is an exception. It can under certain circumstances survive domestication. The population has declined but is still widespread in the Ottawa District in areas of calcareous rock. Individual plants of the Yellow Ladyslipper can be exceptionally long-lived. For example, I know of a plant collected many years ago in the vicinity of Montreal which is now more than 50 years old. However, the fact that this species can survive in cultivation makes it no less important that its habitat and its resident population should be conserved.

In 1989, a conference on the Propagation of North American Terrestrial Orchids was held in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Brought together were many investigators seeking to find ways to conserve our ever-dwindling populations of terrestrial orchids and to propagate them. It was recognized that a wetland, grassland or forest, once paved over, was no longer a suitable home for an orchid, or for anything else for that matter. "Saving" orchids from a threatened habitat only to have them die elsewhere doesn't help the orchids either. Preservation of habitat and natural communities is very important. Propagation of species, both those endangered and those having horticultural potential, is another worthwhile goal.

Orchid seeds are very simple; the embryos are relatively undifferentiated with little (if any) available food for independent growth. In the natural habitat, orchid seeds require a fungal partner (mycorrhiza) for germination. Few seeds ever meet up with the right fungal partner, hence only a very few of the many orchid seeds released germinate and grow to maturity. With a few exceptions such as those orchids that are autogamous (self-pollinating), e.g. *Platanthera hyperborea* (Catling, 1983a), most of our local orchids are dependent upon insect pollinators to set seed. Some years, only a few flowers get pollinated. You might expect that the self-pollinating species might have an edge, yet even those developing seed are vulnerable to a wide variety of risks including drought, deer, rabbits and insect larvae (Light and MacConaill, 1991). The odds can be stacked against orchid reproduction even before it can begin.

Knudson in 1922 determined that orchid seeds could be germinated in the absence of a fungal associate if nutrients such as sugar and mineral salts were supplied (Knudson, 1946). This is known as asymbiotic germination. Epiphytic orchids having a tropical or sub-tropical range are generally easy to germinate using this technique, whereas seeds of temperate terrestrial orchids are more challenging, often requiring cold pre-treatment and darkness. There are exceptions; the Grass Pink, *Calopogon tuberosus*, an eastern North American orchid

found in bogs and fens from Canada to Florida, germinates readily without the need for a cold pre-treatment (Light and MacConaill, 1990).

Terrestrial orchids can also be germinated with a pure culture of the appropriate fungus. Australian and British investigators have been especially successful with this approach of symbiotic germination.

I first became interested in the germination of *Cypripedium calceolus* seed when a friend who grows the more than 50 year old clone of the orchid posed the question, "Can you germinate this seed?" After consulting the available literature, I tried to germinate mature seed using various methods with no success. The following year, 1986, I decided to take the seeds at an early stage of development, 42 days after pollination, following the method of Withner (1953). This necessitated surface-sterilization of the capsule before removal of the seed. I was able to get germination of the pre-mature seeds in just 3 weeks (Light, 1989). Ballard reported in 1987 that he had succeeded in germinating the Showy Ladyslipper seed after two months or more of chilling. The secrets of the germination requirements for certain other species have also been discovered (Oliva and Arditti, 1984). Successful transfer of these seedlings from the safety of the test tube to the real world is no easy task. One can expect considerable seedling mortality. Even though individual plants can be caged to protect them from rabbit teeth and passing feet, snails, slugs and insects can wreak havoc. However, the essential question we might ask ourselves is whether or not these artificially-reared seedlings should ever be re-established in the wild even if such transfer is feasible? Once we know how to, should we? Perhaps the nurtured seedlings belong only in a botanic garden. As this can be the subject of rather heated debate, the only way we can determine the answer is to carry out long term and detailed studies of the populations concerned, doing a controlled experiment.

If we choose to propagate our native orchids for re-introduction into suitable habitats, should we look for any particular characteristics when selecting the propagation stock? We might personally prefer more flowers on a stem, a taller (or shorter) plant, or a particular shade of yellow. This sort of choice is horticultural selection, and is quite different from the process by which natural selection occurs. Horticulturally-desirable plants are selected for their particular attributes and propagated vegetatively or by seed to achieve that end. The choice of individual orchids as seed or pollen parents for conservation has to be at random. When you think about the complexity of natural selection, you come to realize that human-mediated natural selection may be next to impossible to achieve. If we accept this reality, if we accept that we do not yet know enough to appreciate the consequences of our actions, should we not then accept that conservation of the environment is a major factor in allowing a species to survive?

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# A First Try at Raising Bluebirds

*Steve Blight*



*Bluebird nesting box showing coon guard in place*

Late in the fall of 1989, my wife Ann and I took a long, brisk walk on a large property near our cottage on Bob's Lake, about 50 kilometres southwest of Perth. There we saw a mixed flock of about 30 adult and immature Eastern Bluebirds, perched together in a dead elm tree. Realizing that we were in the middle of perfect Eastern Bluebird habitat — a large expanse of pasture, dotted with bushes, beaver ponds, and a few trees — we wondered if nesting boxes would be of use to the local bluebird population. Because of the large numbers of starlings we had also seen in the area, we concluded that there was probably strong competition for the suitable natural cavities in the area, and that nesting boxes could be of some help. At that point we decided to set up a small bluebird trail on the property.

As I reflect on our experience, it can best be characterized as a roller coaster. While overall we were reasonably successful, fledging a total of five broods of bluebirds, one Tree Swallow brood, and one House Wren brood, our emotions were buffeted about by the joys of watching wild creatures being raised and the frustration and sadness of disaster and discouragement.

The property, about 250 ha of land on the north shore of Bob's Lake, is currently being used by a local farmer as summer grazing for about 40 beef cattle. The farmer has a keen interest in nature, and is a real authority on local wildlife. He gave us permission to set up the bluebird boxes, with a warning to watch out for the new bull on the property!

We set out on March 18, 1990 to scout out some locations for the ten bluebird nesting boxes my father had made for us over the winter. Clutching a copy of "The Bluebird" by Lawrence Zeleny<sup>1</sup> (recommended by OFNC members Wright Smith and Colin Gaskell) under my arm to help guide us, we set out on the still snow-covered hills to put up the boxes. We put them up in a rough circle about the property in what we thought were good locations: about 1 1/2 to 2 m high, on the bleached, barkless trunks of dead elms, or on the trunks of lone live trees. We also made sure that each box was at least 100 m away from any other box, in order to avoid territorial squabbling between nesting bluebird pairs. At one point on March 18, as a bonus, we came upon a flock of about 100 Bohemian Waxwings feeding on juniper berries. Clearly, this was serious bird habitat! As it turns out, we had put up the boxes just in time for the beginning of the breeding season. We saw our first pair of bluebirds of the year, perched on a wire, while driving home to Ottawa later that day.

On our first trip back to the property on April 1, the dead trees in one of the beaver ponds on the property had literally filled up with Great Blue Herons. We counted about 18 nests occupied by pairs of herons, as well as a nesting Great Horned Owl in what appeared to be an old heron nest, located well away from the rest of the heron colony. Two whitish fluff-balls sticking out from under the sleepy-looking adult attested to apparent nesting success for the owls. As for bluebirds, we saw a few pairs around the property, but none seemed to be paying particular attention to our boxes. There were also huge mixed flocks of blackbirds, grackles and starlings about, providing us with new assurance that the nesting boxes we had put up would be useful in helping the bluebirds overcome competition with starlings for nesting sites.

On April 23, we experienced our first success! Three of the boxes contained nests holding three or four of the bluebird's distinctive pale blue eggs (roughly the colour of robin's eggs), and one box with a fully formed but empty nest. A few bluebirds were around the boxes, but I thought that given the cold weather, they should have been spending more time with their soon-to-be-families! At the time I didn't realize that bluebirds only lay one egg per day and do not begin incubating until the entire clutch has been laid. Worrying adoptive parent that I had become, I was convinced that the nests had been abandoned because of the cold snap of the preceding week.

Over in the heronry, we counted 13 nests containing incubating adult herons, and a pair of osprey that had set up shop in the middle of them. Whenever one of the ospreys moved about, the herons reacted nervously, but did not seem to panic. All seemed well with the owls.

The weekend of April 30 followed a dizzying change in the weather, from the previous week's high temperatures of less than 5° C to a high of about 31° C on April 29. The warm weather had ushered in huge numbers of migrants (and blackflies!), and on our walk to see the bluebirds, we saw flocks of warblers, including Golden-winged, Palm, and Yellow Warblers, and other summer residents including Northern Orioles, Great-crested Flycatchers and a bright male Scarlet Tanager. Spring had arrived! By now, we had bluebird nests in six of the boxes, and either Tree Swallows or bluebirds investigating the other four boxes. This was easy, we thought.

Things appeared to be progressing along nicely when we checked the boxes on May 13. We had 2 bluebird pairs with young, and four pairs incubating. We also had two pairs of swallows nesting, but without eggs, and one wren nest. We reluctantly removed the wren's nest, which consisted of a jumble of small twigs, in the hope that either bluebirds or swallows would take over residency of the box. Male wrens typically build nests (frequently, as we discovered, just jumbles of twigs) in a large number of cavities within their territories. Wrens don't need every cavity they build nests in, but they are all aggressively defended, making them unavailable to birds such as bluebirds. The last box contained a dead Tree Swallow. Perhaps it had used the box for shelter during the unseasonably cold weather in early May and had perished there.

Then disaster struck. Sometime between May 13 and our next check on May 21, four of the bluebird nests had been destroyed by what appeared to be raccoons. It was exactly as Zeleny described — bits of the nest hanging out of the hole, and a few feathers and egg shells scattered amongst the jumbled remains of the nest left in the box. We trudged with increasing anxiety from box to box, dreading what we might find. Our hearts sank with each disturbed nest. Fortunately, two bluebird nests were spared, and we retained a modicum of hope that some birds would be fledged. Interestingly, the two swallow nests were intact and held eggs. Perhaps they had not begun to lay until after the raccoons had already passed by.

We went home and quickly made up some "coon guards" — 9 cm square pieces of wood, 2 cm thick, each equipped with a hole the same size as the entrance hole on the nesting boxes. When fastened over the entrance to each nesting box, with the holes lined up exactly, the birds can still get in and out easily but it is harder for the raccoon to raid the nest.

We went back on June 2 to install the coon guards on the boxes, and discovered that one of the two bluebird nests that had been intact on May 21 had been destroyed. On a happier note, the other one showed every sign that the young birds had fledged. We do not know for certain if they did, but the nest was fully intact, and it had a flattened, used look about it. Furthermore, there were lots of pin-feather scales in the nesting material, which are shed by young bluebirds during their last few days in the nest (according to Zeleny). Also, to our great

joy, two boxes that had previously held nests that had been destroyed, had bluebird nests with eggs in them again!

Unfortunately, we discovered that one of the two swallow nests had been destroyed as well. Curiously, the other swallow nest now contained four blue bird eggs, with a swallow's egg lodged at the bottom of the box, under the nest! What had happened, we wondered. At this point, we now had four active bluebird nests, one swallow nest, and one determined house wren, who kept rebuilding after having been forcibly evicted on two occasions.

On June 10, the coon guards appeared to be working, as all the nests were intact. One of the bluebird nests had been mysteriously transformed into a swallow's nest with one pale pink egg, but the other three bluebird nests were intact, and were joined by two new bluebird nests and another swallow nest. Over in the heronry, we counted nine active nests, with a total of 14 young herons, and two young osprey. The owls had fledged the previous week. It was getting more and more difficult to keep track of all the action, both good and bad!

Our next visit to the property was on June 23, two weeks later. Unhappily, two bluebird nests had been destroyed in the interim, both showing the telltale signs of a raccoon raid. This certainly did not help bolster our spirits. Up until this point, we had come to believe that the coon guards were doing their job. However, we took inspiration from the plucky little wrens, who, despite our vigorous intervention, had finally managed to lay a clutch of splotchy brown eggs. Despite these discouragements, we chose to continue to do whatever we could to help our "tenants" successfully raise their broods.

Later on the same day, we learned the most discouraging news of all. For business reasons, the farmer had decided to sell the property. The land was sold to a Toronto-based developer, who has some extensive development plans for the property — plans which cannot accommodate a bluebird trail. I decided to contact the Ministry of Natural Resources to find out if they were aware of the situation, especially the potential effects on the herons and ospreys. They informed me that they had reviewed the development plans, and had provided some suggested changes to the developer to accommodate the area's wildlife.

We continued to monitor the nesting boxes up until the middle of August, when we were certain the nesting season had finished, having noted the fledging of four more bluebird broods (for a total of five broods and about 17 young bluebirds), one swallow brood, and one house wren brood. Unfortunately, our enthusiasm for monitoring the boxes had waned a bit since we had learned about the upcoming development of the property. Rather than delighting in the on-going joys of seeing wild creatures being raised, we found ourselves worrying more and more with every visit about what was going to happen to the herons and ospreys, not to mention the bluebirds, when the property gets hit by a bulldozer. In addition, we realized that there was little chance for the year-to-year continuity that we had committed ourselves to at the beginning of the year.

On a personal basis, one of the more troubling aspects of this experience is that it is the first time I have experienced the collision of my own two worlds in such a disturbing way. I earn my bread and butter from an economic system based on, at least partly, economic growth and property rights. It has provided me with a good living and the time to pursue other interests. As a consequence, I have developed a deep love and wonder for nature, and could not imagine life without it. Here, on this chunk of pasture land, another group of people are pursuing their own goals within the same system. The loss to me, and to the creatures that call it home, is enormous. I have long been aware of the potential conflict between my two worlds, but they have been very difficult to reconcile over this experience.

On the positive side, however, if we had chosen not to act on our idea of establishing this short bluebird trail, we would have missed so much — the loud squawking of the young herons; the syrupy, cheery song and the brilliant blue flashes of the male bluebird; the splashes of red, pink and yellow of the masses of columbines and corydalis; and the dogged persistence of the wren pair. Despite the lows, I think we would do it all again.

<sup>1</sup> Zeleny, Lawrence. 1976. Indiana Univ. Press.

This books tells how bird lovers can aid in the conservation of the 3 bluebird species of N. A. Life histories of the birds are described and detailed instructions on how to build nesting boxes and to establish blue bird trail are given.❏

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## New Tenant

No robins used the platform  
we'd installed under the eave  
remembering how the squirrels  
stole their eggs last year  
but now I see a spiders's  
taken over with drafting  
precise as stars, spun out  
a web against the sun  
a silken sail fitted between  
robin's ledge and eave  
one night's work to  
catch a fly  
no birdsong now, but  
an orb-weaver's craft  
silently shimmering  
a dawnson.

*Robert Nero*



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# Decline in Numbers of Nesting Robins

David Brez Carlisle

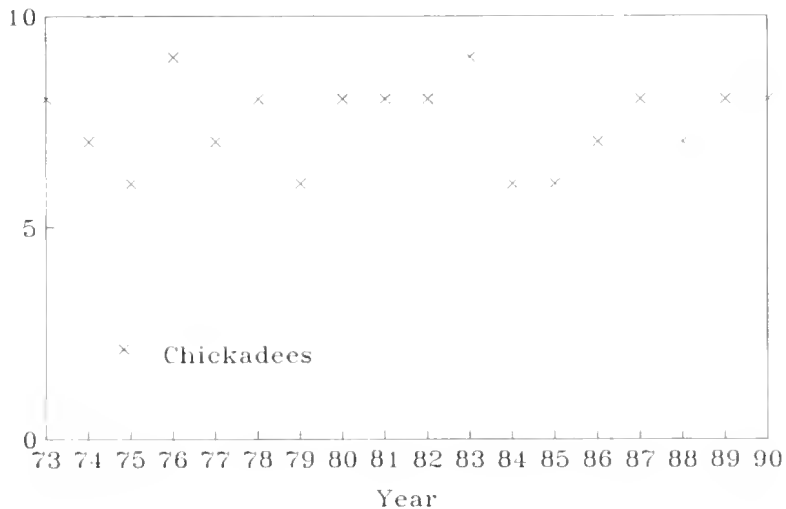
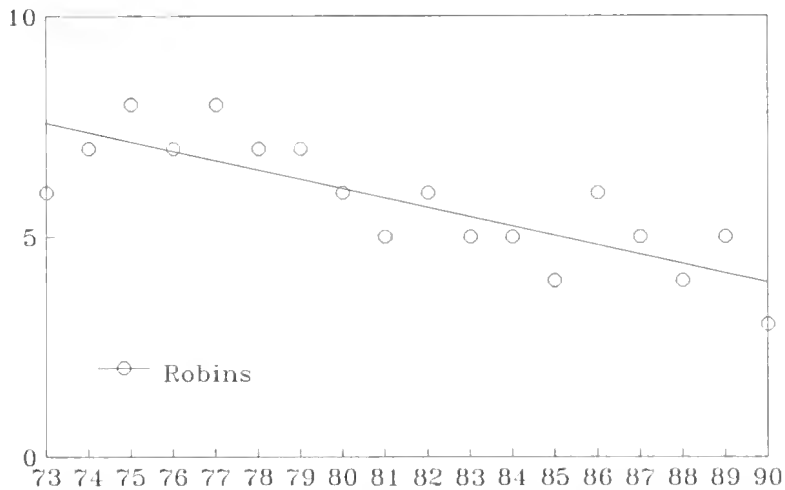
Songbirds in general are said to be declining in numbers in North America, though this remains largely anecdotal. It is difficult to find any hard statistics. Even the annual Christmas counts in Canada hardly touch songbirds. Habitat destruction in the wintering areas further south is one reason suggested for this decline in numbers.

Since 1973 I have been keeping notes in my naturalists' diary on the nesting of birds in my garden, which is located in a rural area on the north bank of the Ottawa River, about 25 km (by road) west of Parliament Hill. The total area is about one hectare (2.4 acres), of which about half is more or less landscaped and the rest, including the precipitous river frontage, is totally wild woodland. In the landscaped part there are numerous trees - mostly pines, but also maple, juniper, cedar, fir, spruce, basswood, poplar, willow, hawthorn, choke cherry, sumac and other smaller species. The wild area includes mixed cedar, oak, juniper, ash and birch.

I have recorded the presence of nests as soon as I have observed them each year. Successful hatching was usually inferred from egg-shell fragments on the ground below the nests. Only three nests in the eighteen years of observation were not noticed until after hatching. I believe that I have recorded all nests in which successful hatching occurred on this plot of land since 1973. Most of the nests were in trees or bushes, a few on the understructure of the raised deck around the house, and swallow nests were often on the house itself.

The American Robin and Black-capped Chickadee have always been the commonest species to have nested on this land since 1973. Other nesters include several species of sparrow, Northern Cardinal (never more than one pair), American Goldfinch, Northern Oriole, woodpeckers and swallows. The most exciting nesting event was a pair of Ospreys, which nested in an old white pine on the edge of the river in 1985. Two years later a pair of Common Ravens successfully reared two young in a clump of cedars.

In the 1970's the annual count of nests of the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) in the garden fluctuated around seven per year. Since 1980 there has been a consistent decline (statistically significant) until 1990 when I could only find three nests. Over the same period the number of nests of Black-capped chickadees (*Parus atricapillus*) that I found remained roughly constant, showing no significant trend. The data for these two species are shown in the graph.



*Hatched nests of American Robins and of Black-capped Chickadees, 1973 to 1990, in a 1-hectare rural Ottawa valley garden (north shore of Ottawa River, 25 km northwest of city centre).*

On the basis of data for two species alone it is impossible to conclude anything at all about the causes of decline, but the migration patterns of these two species agree with the idea that the cause, if the decline is in fact general, may lie in the winter range of the robin, rather than in factors in the Ottawa Valley. The only significant change in the garden has been a slight reduction of the area covered by sumac since 1973 with a concomitant increase in mixed cultivation and lawn, a change which should rather favour robin nesting than the reverse. □

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## Highlights of Back Yard Banding October 1, 1989 to September 30, 1990

*Patricia J. Narraway*

This backyard station has been in operation under permit since Oct. 1982 (see *Trail & Landscape* 24:99-102).

Most of the birds are captured with three 10 m mist nets; a few are taken with small ground traps; and others are nestlings banded from their nest boxes. Nest boxes at three other sites are watched in addition to the two in my back yard. At the main station nets were opened, weather permitting, at dawn on most days.

Under this permit for 1989-1990, I banded a total of 2947 birds. Of these, 2139 were House Finches and over 2052 of these were hatch-year birds which were banded during June, July and August. The additional 808 other birds which were banded belonged to 46 different species. Also included in the grand total were 74 nestlings which were banded at the other registered nest box sites.

The first hatch-year House Finch was banded on May 25. All together I banded 2139 House Finches representing 72.58% of the year's total. This percentage indicates that this species is still increasing, at least at this station (see Table 4). The most distant House Finch recovery for this permit was a female banded in Sept 1989 and reported dead in Jan 1990 in Knoxville TN, USA.

The Tree Swallow nesting at the Station started with the same male that has been using the box since May 1985 together with the female that used the box last year and was banded in April 1989. Their nest of three eggs was abandoned and after the box was cleaned, he returned with another female (also banded in April 1989) and they successfully reared six young.

The nest boxes located at Wickware's Nursery near Dunrobin produced the annual crop of five American Kestrels and, finally, a successful hatch of four Eastern Bluebirds. All Nine birds fledged and flew.

The would-be bluebird boxes at the Ottawa Duck Club produced a bumper crop of Tree Swallows with 38 birds banded. However, it was pleasing to find one of these to be a "broody" female that had been banded at the same site in June 1987. These boxes are not always accessible during the optimum nestling banding period because of the Connaught Rifle Range restrictions. An early cold spell took a toll of both abandoned eggs and adults. Between 10 and 15 adult bird corpses were found crowded into the boxes. While making a final check of these boxes in June we found two banded and three unbanded, fully fledged dead birds. The cause of death has not been determined.

The nest boxes maintained near Munster, Ont. produced 20 Eastern Bluebirds in the second hatch (the first hatch was not banded) and seven House Wrens.

**Table 1: Foreign retraps: birds banded elsewhere, recaptured and released here.**

Band #	Species	Trapped	Banded	Where banded
160006252	Pine Siskin	May 90	Mar 90	Endicott, NY USA
201186338	House Finch	Jun 90	Aug 88	Ottawa Ont

**Table 2: Recaps: birds banded here recaught elsewhere.**

Band #	Species	Banded	Reported	Where captured	Condition
091258118	Rd-wng Blackbird	Jun 87	May 90	Ottawa Ont	dead
092299518	American Robin	Sep 88	Apr 90	Ottawa Ont	dead
181064854	Am. Goldfinch	Apr 89	Jul 90	Chateauguay PQ	alive
184069717	Pine Siskin	Jun 89	Apr 90	Williamsburg MA	dead
202172368	House Finch	Aug 89	May 90	London Ont	collected
202183083	House Finch	Aug 89	Jun 90	Ottawa Ont	dead
202185132	House Finch	Sep 89	Jan 90	Knoxville TN	dead
202185147	House Finch	Sep 89	May 90	Ottawa Ont	dead
202185295	House Finch	Jun 90	Jul 90	Ottawa Ont	cat kill
209151128	House Finch	Jul 90	Aug 90	Ottawa Ont	cat kill

**Table 3: "Old Faithfuls" banded and retrapped at the same site.**

One year later: 22 House Finches; 7 American Goldfinches;  
2 Tree Swallows; 1 Red-winged Blackbird and  
1 Black-capped Chickadee.

2 or more years later ...

Band #	Species	Banded	Retrapped
181064166	American Goldfinch	Sep 88	May 90
202156552	House Finch	Aug 88	May 90
202156728	House Finch	Aug 88	Jun 90
206156514	House Finch	Aug 88	Jun 90
201199259	House Finch	Aug 88	Jun 90
202156587	House Finch	Aug 88	Jul 90
181064098	American Goldfinch	Jul 88	Jun 90
206156667	House Finch	Aug 88	Aug 90
201199114	House Finch	Jun 88	Jun 90
201199239	House Finch	Jul 88	Aug 90
135123869	Song Sparrow	Sep 87	Apr 90
175048417	Black-capped Chickadee	Jul 87	May 90
201094896	House Finch	Sep 87	Jul 90
201094852	House Finch	Aug 87	Aug 90
201094815	Tree Swallow *	Jun 87	Jun 90
201086292	House Finch	Sep 86	Aug 90
201086041	Tree Swallow	May 85	Jul 90
129390313	Mourning Dove	Jun 85	Aug 90

\*Female brooding eggs at Ottawa Duck Club site.

**Table 4. A comparison of some species as a percentage of the total banded since the station started.**

	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90
Total banded	1836	562	3070	1767	719	1671	4421	2947
House Finch	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	7.2%	10.2%	36.2%	42.8%	72.6%
Siskin	0.0%	16.7%	37.2%	20.0%	14.9%	21.8%	36.7%	7.6%
Goldfinch	2.2%	2.1%	21.3%	7.4%	4.6%	3.2%	13.1%	5.1%
Chickadee	9.2%	6.9%	0.6%	1.3%	2.6%	0.7%	1.0%	1.0%
Junco	5.8%	10.3%	1.6%	4.9%	3.3%	3.7%	1.2%	2.8%
Redpoll	0.0%	9.7%	6.6%	7.2%	45.9%	21.3%	0.2%	0.0%
Robin	7.0%	2.3%	1.4%	1.0%	2.1%	1.0%	0.4%	0.8%

**Table 5. Summary of species banded October 1989 to September 1990**

Species	Total	%	Species	Total	%
Mourning Dove	12	0.41	Red-eyed Vireo	5	0.17
American Kestrel	5	0.17	Warbling Vireo	3	0.10
Downy Woodpecker	4	0.14	Northern Parula	1	0.03
Eastern Wood-Pewee	1	0.03	Yellow Warbler	5	0.17
Least Flycatcher	3	0.10	Magnolia Warbler	3	0.10
Blue Jay	4	0.14	Chestnut-sided Warbler	1	0.03
European Starling	21	0.71	Bay-breasted Warbler	1	0.03
Brown-headed Cowbird	9	0.31	Blackburnian Warbler	1	0.03
Red-winged Blackbird	21	0.71	Northern Waterthrush	1	0.03
Baltimore Oriole	4	0.14	Common Yellowthroat	2	0.07
Common Grackle	9	0.31	Wilson's Warbler	1	0.03
Purple Finch	7	0.24	House Wren	7	0.24
House Finch	2139	72.58	Winter Wren	2	0.07
American Goldfinch	151	5.12	White-breasted Nuthatch	3	0.10
Pine Siskin	225	7.63	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	0.07
White-throated Sparrow	3	0.10	Black-capped Chickadee	30	1.02
American Tree Sparrow	5	0.17	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0.03
Chipping Sparrow	25	0.85	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5	0.17
Slate-colored Junco	83	2.82	Veery	1	0.03
Oregon Junco	1	0.03	Swainson's Thrush	1	0.03
Song Sparrow	27	0.92	Hermit Thrush	3	0.10
Northern Cardinal	6	0.20	American Robin	22	0.75
Tree Swallow	49	1.66	Eastern Bluebird	24	0.81
Cedar Waxwing	8	0.27			

Total number of species: 47      Individuals: 2947      (99.97%)

This includes:

- 5 American Kestrel nestlings
- 4 Eastern Bluebird nestlings at Wickware's Nursery, Dunrobin, Ont.
- 20 Eastern Bluebird nestlings near Munster, Ont.
- 7 House Wren nestlings near Kanata, Ont.
- 38 Tree Swallows at Ottawa Duck Club, Kanata, Ont.

Note:

The common names used throughout the report are the ONLY names accepted by the North American Bird Banding Offices. ▣

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# A Robin Doesn't Stand a Chance

*Jack Holiday*

June 19, 1989 found me walking the trails of Stony Swamp with my net ready for any interesting butterflies. It was a warm and humid day, temperature about 32° C. Heavy dews had made the grass and shrubs wet, and the warm temperatures had failed to evaporate the droplets.

I came to a low area with swamps on each side of the trail. There were many trees, some living, many dead, forming a canopy over the trail. The trail itself deteriorated here to black muck, water soaked, deep water-filled ruts, and very slippery. One had to be careful to avoid getting boots full of stinking water and also to avoid the tiny wood frogs newly changed from tadpoles, and leaving the swamp for life in the woods. Gingerly I stepped from one "dry" patch to the next, holding on to available shrubs for balance.

Suddenly I was startled by a very loud "Kak Kak Kak" behind me. My head swung around just in time to see a blurred brown something swoop over my head and disappear through the trees. A charge of adrenalin started my heart pounding, the hair lifted on the back of my head and all my senses were alert.

I crouched, trying to understand what had happened. It must have been a bird - a large bird, perhaps a hawk. If so, judging by the sounds, and what I had read in Bent,<sup>1</sup> a Goshawk. A Goshawk? In Stony Swamp?

Within seconds the loud "Kak Kak Kak" was heard again and I crouched even lower, watching warily the area of swamp trees from behind which the sound came. Then she<sup>2</sup> burst into the open 30 m away, coming fast, an indistinct blurr. I failed to recognize a Goshawk, or even a hawk. The attack was so swift and sudden that the eyes failed to distinguish the bird from the background of sun-dappled leaves, branches and trunks. Twice more she attacked before I could move away.

Gathering my breath, I found myself trembling, and my heart pounding from the unprovoked attack. Probably the bird had her nest in one of several very large white pines about 50 m from the trail.

I was similarly attacked on subsequent trips to Stony Swamp on four different days. Twice I took my camera along and attempted to photograph the attacks. On the second attempt I used a flash and even though I "panned" the camera, most frames were blank or showed only an indistinct blurred image. Twice she came right down the trail, and I could see her "rowing" two or three rapid wing strokes. Subsequently, when not under attack, I attempted to spot the nest, but the pines were too tall, the intervening foliage a hindrance, and I didn't find it. In late July I saw one young bird on a dead tree, so at least that one had fledged.

My experience was similar to that of Dr. George M. Sutton (1925) who spent a whole day watching a Goshawk's nest and who reported "The most memorable thing about the day's experience was the method of attack of the female bird, which has partly explained to me the ease with which some of these birds capture their prey. When the Goshawk left her perch to strike at me her set wings and slim body were for several seconds almost invisible and the only actual movement perceptible was the increase in the size of the body as she swiftly approached. Three times at least I was looking directly at the approaching bird and did not see her at all because the lines of her wings and body so completely harmonized with the surroundings, and the front view was comparatively so small."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps some of you readers were also attacked, or had reports from your teenagers about strange and frightening happenings when they went "mud-riding" their bicycles through Stony Swamp? Keen young eyes would get better sightings than I did.

I didn't see any signs of Goshawks there in 1990. The only bird "remains" I found along the trail were those of two Robins. A Robin hopping along or running little dashes down the pathway in search of worms and grubs would stand no chance against the swift, "invisible," silent attack of a Goshawk. Even when I heard it "Kaking" loudly, I found it difficult to see what was approaching.

"We do not live by bread alone. Beauty and courage, swiftness and strength mean something to us; and we find these qualities in high degree in the hawks of the Accipiter clan. Especially is this true of the largest and strongest of them, the Goshawk, one of the deadliest, handsomest, bravest birds of prey in the world."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bent, Arthur Cleveland. 1930. Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey. Part. I.

<sup>2</sup> The literature indicates that the protector of the nesting area is usually the female.

<sup>3</sup> Bent (above), p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Sass, Herbert, Ravenal, *in* Bent (above), p. 125. ▣



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# Summer Bird Sightings

## June - July 1990

*V. Bernard Ladouceur*



*Spotted Redshank, highlight of the 1989 birding year.  
Photo by Tony Beck*

From a birding perspective June is a month to scour the Ottawa River for rare gulls, terns and maybe even a jaeger. There is also hope for a rare shorebird or a rare breeding species. July? I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I'd describe July as a good time for butterfly collecting, waterskiing, watching the grass grow - not very exceptional for birding.

June 1990 was a disappointment with very few highlights - two Caspian Terns at Britannia, Arctic Terns were virtually absent and there were no interesting gulls reported (let alone jaegers!).



June ended with a whimper ... and then came July... It started with the discovery of a Western Meadowlark about 48.5 km south of the Peace Tower on July 2. This was the first "gettable" Western Meadowlark in over a decade as it was seen several times over a two week period. It is quite likely that the bird arrived during the spring and remained until autumn.

Champlain Look-out turned out to be a hot spot with Yellow-throated Vireo and Yellow-billed Cuckoo being observed several times. Brief appearances by a Carolina Wren, July 16, and a Cerulean Warbler, July 29, made one wonder what other surprises are hiding in Gatineau Park.

The highlight of the 1990 birding year was Ottawa's first record of a Spotted Redshank found July 18 at Casselman. This Eurasian species is like the Yellowlegs in stature and is easily recognized by its near black (breeding) plumage and bright red legs and a largely red bill. No fewer than 75 birders from Ontario, Quebec, and New York State were able to observe this bird between July 18 and 24. A Willet at Ottawa Beach on July 29 capped off just a wonderful month of July and set the stage for what was to be a pretty interesting Fall. ☐

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## Winter Bird Sightings December 90 - February 91

*V. Bernard Ladouceur*

### Synopsis

The December 1990 to February 1991 period started with a bang. A Yellow-throated Warbler, a Varied Thrush, two Carolina Wrens, and a Northern Hawk-Owl were observed within the first eight days. Unfortunately, what followed was perhaps the quietest Ottawa winter in two decades. Three Northern Hawk-Owls in the city's east end turned out to be the only unusual birds seen consistently throughout the period. Along Steel Line Road, below the Gatineau Escarpment, there were sightings of Bald and Golden Eagles. A gray-phase Gyrfalcon and two Great Grey Owls also put in appearances.

The above list may not appear to be that bad, but one or two more highlights plus one or two more species sticking it out the entire winter would have gone a long way to change our impressions. A handful of birds can make the difference between a winter being interesting and well, boring - almost. Additionally, a winter nearly devoid of finches, Three-toed Woodpeckers, Gray Jays, and Boreal Chickadees just adds to the dullness. Fortunately, Snowy Owls, Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks were present in above average numbers to help break the monotony. What a difference a year makes.



*Immature, gray-phase Gyr Falcon*  
*Photo by Tony Beck.*

### Sightings

There was a single Red-necked Grebe seen Dec. 16. Some individuals of this species seem to take their time going south as they have been seen as late as January. A sub-adult Double-crested Cormorant was present Dec 9-16 just below Parliament Hill along the Ottawa River. A Great Blue Heron was seen Jan. 5 at Black Rapids. Two Green-winged Teals were observed below Parliament Hill Dec. 16. A female Northern Pintail, a male American Wood Duck, and a female Hooded Merganser wintered at Manotick.

Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks were numerous until at least mid-February (other first migrants would appear shortly after that). An immature Bald Eagle was seen at Black Rapids Jan. 5. On Steel Line Rd., an adult Bald Eagle was seen Feb. 3 and several times subsequently, and an immature/sub-adult Golden Eagle on Dec. 8. (It was first observed in November).

Falcon reports include a Merlin Dec. 16 and Jan 3, an overwintering Peregrine Falcon, and a gray phase Gyr Falcon Dec. 15 and 22 - unconfirmed sightings followed. Another Gyr Falcon would appear in March and descriptions of it indicate that the bird was exceedingly pale. Many of the unconfirmed sightings

from December and January also described a very pale bird, so in retrospect these sightings perhaps shouldn't be referred to as "unconfirmed."

Gray Partridge were reported from a number of locations. Seven species of gulls lingered into January including at least two Lesser Black-backed, an immature Thayer's, and Ring-billed Gulls.

Short-eared Owls were back at their east end location in (apparently) reduced numbers, however, several individual reports came in, including Dec.8 from Luskville. Long-eared Owls returned to a roost south of Russell. One bird was seen south of the airport Jan. 13. Snowy Owls were present in above average numbers with four being reported from both Wall and Eagleson Roads.

It was the best winter for Northern Hawk-Owls since 1981-82. Reports came from Dolman Ridge Road, Dec. 2, Hawthorne Road, Jan 4, and the Rockcliffe Parkway, Jan. 13. These birds lingered into late February. Additional reports came from Timm Drive (Kanata), Dec. 6 and Trim Road (Cumberland) Jan 6. A Great Gray Owl was seen on Timm Drive, Feb. 24. A second bird was found with it, Feb. 26. At least one of these birds lingered into March.

A Gray Jay was seen at the end of Dolman Road (Mer Bleue), Dec. 9. Two Carolina Wrens were in Clyde Woods, Dec. 1. A Varied Thrush was confirmed at Perkins, Dec. 8 and may have been present throughout the winter. A Hermit Thrush was seen behind Parliament Hill (again!), Dec. 16. Two or three Northern Mockingbirds were present throughout the period. Bohemian Waxwings were scarce until about Jan. 8 when their numbers started to build. Northern Shrikes were present in very good numbers.

Warbler highlights include a Yellow-throated Warbler at Buckingham, first observed in late November. This species has appeared in November in our area on at least three previous occasions (1977, 1986 and 1989) and it was only the third Quebec record. As it was last observed Dec. 8, it was the latest Ottawa record. Almost as amazing was an Ovenbird at a west Ottawa feeder Dec.16.

A meadowlark (species unknown) was reported from Sarsfield Road, Jan 6. Finally, Pine Grosbeaks, Crossbills, Pine Siskins, and Redpolls were very scarce in December and virtually absent thereafter. ▢



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# Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee

For further information,  
call the Club number (722-3050).

*Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.*

**ALL OUTINGS:** *Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and the activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.*

**REGISTERED BUS TRIPS:** *Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Ellaine Dickson, 2037 Honeywell Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K2A 0P7, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing.*

**EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE:** *The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities. Club members must show their membership cards to gain access for Club functions after regular museum hours. There is a charge for parking in the museum lot.*

Saturday

6 July

9:30 a.m.

## BUTTERFLY HABITATS

Leader: Peter Hall (733-0698)

Meet: Neatby Bldg., front entrance, Central Experimental Farm, one block west of the Irving Place - Maple Lane stoplight on Carling Ave.

This all-day outing will provide an opportunity to observe butterflies in several different habitats and to examine their close relationship with various species of plants essential to particular stages of their life cycle. Bring a lunch and a butterfly net if you have one.

Saturday

17 August

7:00 a.m.

## SHOREBIRDS

Leader: Bruce Di Labio

Meet: Front entrance, Claxton building, Tunneys Pasture.

This half-day outing will provide novice birdwatchers with an opportunity to observe adult and immature shorebirds in migration.

- Saturday**  
**24 August**  
**7:30 a.m.**      **LATE SUMMER BIRDS**  
Leader: Roy John  
Meet: Britannia Drive-In Theatre, Carling Avenue.  
Bring a snack and binoculars for this half-day trip.
- Sunday**  
**25 August**      **FALL BIRD COUNT**  
Compiler: Daniel Perrier (746-6717)  
Participate in the annual count of the fall bird population in the Ottawa District (a 50 km radius from Parliament Hill).  
For details contact the compiler.
- Date to be decided.**      **MUSHROOM FIELD TRIP**  
Leader:  
Meet: Supreme Court Building, Wellington St.  
This outing will be limited to 25 people. Participants must register before September 15th by telephoning the Club number 722-3050 (after 10 a.m.). When a date and location have been selected, registrants will be notified.
- Saturday**  
**7 September**  
**9:00 a.m.**      **ASTERS AND GOLDENRODS**  
Leader: Ellaine Dickson  
Meet: Lincoln Fields Galleria, northeast corner of parking lot at Richmond and Assaly Roads.  
At this time of year asters and goldenrods are the most conspicuous wildflowers. Join Ellaine and try to learn to identify the many species of both. Bring a snack for this half-day outing.
- Sunday**  
**8 September**      **ELEVENTH ANNUAL SEEDATHON**  
Support the OFNC winter bird feeding operations by sponsoring a birder on the annual seedathon.  
Pledges may be sent to Seedathon, The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Box 3264, Station C, Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4J5.

**Tuesday**  
**10 September**  
**8:00 p.m.**

**OFNC MONTHLY MEETING**  
**MEMBERS' SLIDE NIGHT**

Meet: **Salon**, Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and  
McLeod Streets.

Admission: At least one natural history slide or a 50 cent  
donation to the Alfred Bog Fund.

This popular annual event will provide an excellent chance  
to share your favourite natural history slides and  
reminiscences of trips, both local and far a-field, with fellow  
members. Any number of slides up to 15 will be welcome.  
Those bringing the mandatory one slide need not speak if  
they do not wish to do so. Those bringing more than one or  
two slides please contact Catherine O'Keefe (745-4441) to  
prearrange their presentation.

**Sunday**  
**15 September**  
**10 a.m.**

**ANNUAL PICNIC: WILDLIFE GARDEN**

Meet: parking area near Barn no. 82 along the east side of  
Prince of Wales Drive, south of the Arboretum traffic  
circle.

Members of the Wildlife Garden Committee will lead tours  
of the area to illustrate some of the landscaping activities that  
have occurred during the summer such as the establishment  
of a wetlands area, a butterfly meadow and various tree  
plantings. A fee of \$3.00 per person will be charged to defray  
the cost of apples, cheese and cake.

Bring your own lunch.

**Sunday**  
**22 September**  
**9 a.m.**  
**to**  
**1 p.m.**

**GEOLOGY**

Leader: Bruce Summers

Meet: Westgate Shopping Centre, Carling Avenue &  
Merivale Road.

Come and learn more about the geological and glacial history  
of the Ottawa area.

Bring a snack, suitable footwear and a hand lens.

- Wednesday**      **GULLS OF THE CORNWALL POWER DAM**  
**25 September**      **Leader: Bruce Di Labio**  
**8 a.m.**      **Meet: Elmvale Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot.**  
This will be a full-day trip to the American side of the Moses-Saunders Power Dam. The emphasis will be on gull identification. Please bring appropriate identification (driver's licence and birth certificate).
- Sunday**      **AUTUMN COLOURS BUS TRIP**  
**29 September**      **Meet: Supreme Court Building, front entrance, Wellington Street.**  
**8 a.m.**      **Cost: \$10.00 (see Registered Bus Trips for details).**  
**to**      **Enjoy a scenic drive through Renfrew County on the way to the Bonnechère Caves. There will be some emphasis on tree identification as well as an opportunity to explore the caves.**  
**4 p.m.**      **Bring a lunch and dress warmly.**

### **Mammal Atlas Workshop**

The first workshop on the Mammal Atlas is scheduled for June 9 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Carleton University. FON staff will be on hand to show how to identify mammals and to present other relevant information. We hope to make use of the Carleton University mammal collection.

Please let Roy John know if you wish to get involved.

[Tel.: 226-2019 or 997-1921.]

### **OFNC Library**

We have a small library of about 40 books, some journals and a few LP records which was donated to the club from the estate of the late Frank Bell. The books are on natural history and most of them deal with bird identification and bird watching in various parts of the world.

Members are encouraged to make use of this library. It is housed at the home of Doreen Watler, tel. 728-0290.

This library could be made more accessible if it were inventoried and catalogued. If you can help, Doreen would appreciate hearing from you. ☐

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## The GREEN LINE



Summer at last! A time for many of us to travel on vacation and enjoy the riches of nature. Yet, even as we revisit our favourite places to renew ourselves on vacation we often discover the tentacles of land speculators and developers encircling more of the natural world.

And if you treasure something, the cliff where hawks wheel or the mud pond where spotted turtles bask, you should try and protect it. As naturalists, we can bring a scientific dimension to the questions which must be asked about change.

In the province of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs is responsible for all public planning decisions, but this responsibility is delegated to various bodies under provisions of the Planning Act. The most common of these bodies is the Council of your local municipality.

Municipalities are creatures of the province. The municipal council, as a body, has responsibilities to assure a supply of vacant, properly designated and zoned land for residential, institutional and industrial use. The tools to accomplish this are Official Plans and

Zoning By-laws. Official Plans set out objectives, policies and land use designations.

Assume a development application is either approved or rejected by the Planning Committee, or City Council, and somebody doesn't like it. Any person, or organization can appeal to the Minister for a review of the decision.

Acting on the Minister's behalf, an OMB panel, usually consisting of two or three hearing officers, is convened to hear evidence, examine documentation and to hear opinions of the public.

All powers of the Minister of Municipal Affairs are available to the OMB and it may reject or substantially revise a municipal Official Plan as well as establishing conditions of their approval. As it represents the Minister, only Cabinet or a higher court can review its decision.

The board hears from experts of all kinds brought forward by each party. Questioning by the board and the other lawyers follows. It is increasingly common for the board to allow

interested members of the public such as the OFNC to question witnesses and to address the board. The environmental and naturalist groups depend exclusively on volunteers. That is why any money you can chip in to help out is so much appreciated.

The board withdraws, deliberates, and publishes its decision by mail.

Bob Rae, the premier of Ontario, has recently appointed a three-person commission of inquiry which is to review all known difficulties with the planning act, and the role of approval and review bodies including the OMB.

We hope that this may result in the "Greening" of the Planning Act. There are many changes that could be made for the better. We need a natural areas policy to protect both forests and wetlands. One often-suggested reform is to make local governments responsible for environmental planning, but if this is to happen without disastrous consequences, the provincial government have got to come across with the necessary policies and funding for the environmental protection and the conservation of natural areas in Ontario.

### Sunrise Standoff in Glenwood!

by Ian Huggett

Residents of Glenwood in Aylmer believe in defending the environmental integrity of their neighbourhood. In fact, some are even willing to stand in the path of a bulldozer.

In early June, the City of Aylmer assured Glenwood residents that work on a drainage ditch through a small marsh would not begin until after a public meeting on June 12. Yet on June 12, many Glenwood residents awoke to the roar of heavy equipment.

About thirty infuriated residents, many still in their pyjamas, rushed to the marsh to demand that the equipment operators stop working. When the operators refused, some of the residents, including several children, blocked the path of a bulldozer.

The marsh is a favourite spot for Glenwood children; every spring, classes from the local elementary school study the many plants and animals that thrive there. Residents were concerned that the operators' carelessness would seriously undermine the marsh's viability.

City officials, who saw the marsh as simply a haven for mosquitoes, refused to suspend the work even after Glenwood Alderman Jules Nadon intervened on behalf of his constituents. However, the Glenwood residents refused to give ground, despite being threatened with arrest. In the end, the city relented, agreeing to do the rough work, on the condition that Glenwood residents replant the vegetation.

However, the residents' committee formed to oversee this effort worries that breaks made in the shale table underlying the marsh will prevent the ground from retaining sufficient water. If the city had consulted with residents before starting work, this problem could have been avoided.

# THE SHORT STORY...

## Ottawa has a new Official Plan

The revised plan was finally adopted by City Council after three years of public consultation. On the positive side, the new OP includes a network of open space called "Greenways" and "environmentally-sensitive areas" (ESAs), along with a requirement for Municipal Environmental Evaluations for certain development proposals. On the negative side, the OP calls for more intensive development in the downtown area, the extent of which will be studied with still more public involvement.

## OMB Favours Developers in Official Plan Hearings

A lengthy series of Ontario Municipal Board hearings began in October 1990 and lasted until January 1991 to hear formal objections to the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Official Plan that was adopted by RMOC Council in 1989. The OMB decisions on matters ranging from Queensway collector lanes to wetland boundaries in Leitrim were finally released in the first week of June. Over twenty planning decisions and related issues were at stake, but the OMB generally favoured expansion of urban development and infrastructure over almost every objection by environmental and community interest groups.

## Carson Woods OMB hearings to resume in September

A second session of the hearings on planning issues affecting the development of these lands along the Aviation Parkway was held in the first week of June. The OMB has decided to postpone further proceedings until some procedural difficulties with a traffic study are resolved. The Carson Woods Community Association and the Conservation Committee of the OFNC, have made strong representation to the OMB panel to preserve as much of the woodland as possible by considering all of the alternatives.

## Leitrim Wetlands Rezoned for More Urban Development

Among the other matters relating to the Regional Official Plan, the OMB granted an extension of the Leitrim Urban Area to the owners of the southern part of the Leitrim Wetland, as long as the "undevelopable" wetland portion is defined to the satisfaction of the OMNR, the City of Gloucester and the RMOC. This surprising decision could make it possible to allocate the 3,200 housing units in the Regional OP over a larger area, retaining more wetland. The only way this could happen is for the two developers to agree to sharing the costs and the allotment. Unfortunately, Tartan Homes, the principal owner of the northern portion of the wetland, has said that they still intend to put all the units they can on their land. Remer Holdings Ltd, of Montreal, who own the newly designated urban area (Leitrim Urban Area Phase 2), have stated their willingness to dedicate their wetland area to public ownership, as Tartan has also promised.

## Ottawa Senators' Palladium

The Ontario Municipal Board hearings on the rezoning of the Palladium site are continuing, but with a larger emphasis of late on the planning issues for the adjacent lands. The Palladium development would be the keystone of a much larger development of a study area, called the "West Urban Centre", which would "fill in" the vacant land around Stittsville. Local citizens and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Foods are the objectors to the choice of site.

## West Urban Transitway Corridor Alternatives

The extension of the transitway is being studied by the Region under the provisions of the Environmental Assessment Act, which requires the public consideration of all alternatives. One of the alternative corridors for routing the new extension that particularly concerns OFNC members is the "Britannia corridor" option, which would situate the transitway adjacent to the Britannia Conservation Area. The OFNC has expressed its concerns to the planning consultants and has recommended the "Queensway corridor" as the preferred alternative.

## Gillies' Grove

The Oblate Fathers, the landowners of this 150-year-old white pine forest, have applied directly to the Ontario Municipal Board to approve their zoning request. They still intend to make the greatest possible profit on the development of the Grove. The Save the Grove Committee has met with the landowners and city planning committee to present alternatives but have yet to find a resolution. On the positive side, the Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society has offered to issue tax receipts for any donations made payable to the "Save the Grove Project". Contact Chris Sargent at 731-2703. The Federal Minister of Forests, Frank Oberle, has also offered his support to conservation efforts for the Gillies Grove.

## Constance Creek vs. Eagle Creek

Golf is being played on the Eagle Creek fairways but is it legal? The OMB repealed the zoning bylaw that would permit the developer to build the golf course, but did not order restoration of the wetland. The Wetlands Preservation Group, who successfully opposed the development, could now use your help in lining their war chest for the next stage of the process. Please contact Phil Reilly (OFNC Conservation Award Winner for 1990) at 832-2965 if you can help with time or donations to this worthy cause.

**The GREEN LINE News Editor:**  
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